

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Cancel claims 1 through 4 and add the following new claims:

5. (New) A specimen container chuck apparatus comprising:

an open/closed driver and a pair of laterally opposed holding members coupled to the driver, said holding members being movable by said driver between open and closed positions enabling the holders to hold an elongated tubular specimen container;

each of the holding members being formed by a bent elastic linear member including (i) a pair of support sections, one end of each of the support sections being coupled to the open/closed driver, (ii) a pair of container contact sections connected at one end to the respective support sections, and extending along a lengthwise direction of the tubular specimen container and biased toward the specimen container, and (iii) a coupling section coupling opposite ends of the container contact sections and curved to surround the specimen container with a gap therebetween.

6. (New) A specimen container chuck apparatus according to claim 5 further comprising tube formed of a soft material and fitted onto the container contact sections.

7. (New) A specimen container chuck apparatus according to claim 5 wherein the elastic linear member is formed of an elastic metal wire.

8. (New) A specimen container chuck apparatus according to claim 6 wherein the soft material includes one of rubber and soft resin.

9. (New) The specimen container chuck apparatus according to claim 7 wherein the elastic metal wire is formed of phosphor bronze.

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10. (New) A specimen container chuck apparatus according to claim 5 wherein the bent elastic linear member of each of said holding members is generally u-shaped in configuration with distal ends of legs thereof coupled to said open/closed driver.